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MUSIC IN PAINTING

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THE PITMAN GALLERY

MUSIC IN PAINTING

with an introduction
and notes by
Lawrence Haward

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Introduction by Lawrence Haward

Of all the arts with which man is brought into habitual contact, none so persistently accompanies him throughout his daily life as the art of music. He makes early acquaintance with the other arts as well, for he builds houses with bricks upon the nursery floor, scrawls lively images on walls and slates and sheets of paper, dresses up and acts, and is soon introduced to rhyme sheets and the simpler anthologies of poetry. Poetry, as Rousseau points out, was invented before prose; but music came before either, and from its nature preceded architecture, drama and the graphic arts. Already in the cradle, before they can talk, children hum and sing and hammer out rhythms with toys and spoons, and later with tongs and drumsticks; by the time they go to school they have their heads full of tunes (folk songs and the melodies of the great masters if they are lucky); and when they grow up they get music in and out of doors, at all seasons and to suit all moods.

Nor is this music just an accessory to their normal pursuits, something snatched as an after-thought to gratify a passing fancy. It goes far deeper than that. The milk-boy whistling on his daily round, the sailor home on leave fingering his concertina at the fireside, the group of college students seated round a table singing madrigals, the young couple leaning like the Blessed Damozel over the bar of the topmost tier at the Opera, the congregation at a cathedral service, and the children running out into the street to watch the soldiers marching by—all these find that music is a necessity, not a mere casual incident, in their lives. Man, in fact, like the lady on the white horse, may be said to have music wherever he goes, from the cradle to the grave, and he has it because he needs it.

Pictures, in so far as their subject-matter represents what painters have seen, or imagined, might be expected to reflect this close association of music with daily life, and this is precisely what many of them do. In others, the artist has concerned himself little, if at all, with representation, having set out to paint not so much what he saw in the world as what he thought and felt about it. Here again music will often find a place owing to its emotional associations. The picture is the product of the artist's mood, and this mood he wants to evoke in the spectator. He therefore makes use of music as one of the motifs or incidents in his pictorial commentary, knowing that it will help him to tighten the screw and increase the emotional tension. Sometimes musical instruments will be introduced into a picture without any reference to their nature or function in real life, and solely for the value their bulk, outlines and colour give to the artist's pattern; in other words, for purposes of purely formal design.

Leaving for the moment the last category, to take stock of the way in which painters have illustrated musical subjects, or have given us through music a glimpse of their own mental processes, and making allowance for the artist's established right to modify what the eye sees according to the dictates of his pictorial imagination, we find that from the strictly musical point of view these pictures are often of considerable interest inasmuch as they provide historical evidence of the nature of musical instruments and of the methods of playing them. We shall see too that the majority of European pictures of this sort (Eastern art does not fall within the scope of this volume) are either domestic scenes by painters belonging to the northern schools, or Italian altar-pieces in which angels and saints are contributing by their own performance to some pious orgy, some traditional act of holy ritual.

Certain religious pictures which record what the artist has had before him in the studio, or which reconstruct an incident in scripture, and are at the same time, in a sense, tokens of worship on the part of the artist or of the donor who commissioned them, may be considered as falling into a kind of intermediate group, half-representation half-emotional, or sometimes the one, and sometimes the other. The heavenly host, or the Mother and Child, or whatever the subject may be, can be based more or less accurately on portraiture and the accessories round the figures can be correspondingly realistic, or they may both be stylised according to a decorative convention; or everything can be painted in such a way that the grouping, colouring and general design, with hardly any literal representation at all, convey the right emotional atmosphere as though artist and spectator alike were kneeling at the altar.

Good examples of religious pictures in which the mood is one of deep devotion, but in which the musical details are portrayed with reasonable but unpedantic accuracy, are Masaccio's *Virgin and Child*, Lorenzo Monaco's *Coronation of the Virgin*, both in the National Gallery, and many of the small panels in the same collection by Orcagna, who was himself a musician. For a contrast to the gentle, happy scenes which these depict one may turn to Hieronymus Bosch's *Inferno* in the Escurial, in which a lute, a vielle (or hurdy-gurdy), a recorder, bagpipes and a harp have been transformed into monstrous instruments of torture.

In Blake's engraving of the Morning Stars singing for joy, the members of the heavenly choir, like a group of saints in an El Greco or like Crashaw's Saint Teresa, express adoration exalted to ecstasy, so that there is no place

Plate 1. School of Palma Vecchio. *A Concert*. See page 24

here for precise information about the music. In Fra Angelico's altar-piece *Christ Surrounded by Angels*, in the *Virgin of the Girdle* by Matteo di Giovanni (Plate 2), both of them in the National Gallery, and again in Memling's musical triptych in the Antwerp Museum, the painters' concern with the music as such is subordinated to the grave and gentle pietism with which they have approached their subject. But that they were also interested in its musical aspect is obvious, for in all these pictures the singing angels are supported by a miscellaneous set of instruments—plucked and bowed strings, flutes, recorders, percussion, organ and trumpets (used by Fra Angelico with strikingly decorative effect, as they are by Mantegna in his *Triumph of Julius Caesar*), so that we seem to be in the presence of a full orchestra. We must, however, not forget that what is now meant by orchestration, that is a score with specific indications by the composer of the instruments required, as distinct from the playing of the parts by any instruments that happen to be at hand, dates only from *c.* 1600. During the Baroque age, with its emphasis on the single vocal line and with the consequent development of opera as against the polyphonic madrigal, stringed instruments predominated and especially the violin family, because they were capable of more variety of *timbre* and more dynamic contrasts than the wind, and above all because they could recall the *legato* phrasing and the sustained notes of the human voice.

For more thorough-going realism in depiction of the method of playing, combined however with artistic licence in the shapes of some of the instruments, one has only to turn to Cosimo Tura's *Virgin and Child Enthroned* (Plate 3) where, but for the expensive throne on which they are all placed, we might be overlooking a group of students practising their lessons in some musical Academy. In this, as in the other altar-pieces that have been mentioned, and again in the shutters of the Van Eycks' *Adoration of the Lamb*, a feature of interest to the musician is the extremely conscientious behaviour of

most of the performers, who give the impression of being well aware that devotion alone, without deliberate concentration on the means of expression, will never make a good church musician. In the Tura, for instance, one can see how thoughtfully the organist is placing her hands, with flat knuckles and depressed wrists, upon the keyboard, and with what care the lute is being tuned by one angel and the bow drawn across the strings of the viol by another; the slight momentary discomfort they are caused being due not to the difficulties of the music or the curious shape of the instruments, but to the haloes which show signs of slipping off. In the Masaccio too the careful and exact placing of the fingers of both hands of the angel in the right-hand corner is worth noting, and the Van Eyck angels have brows puckered from excess of zeal.

In the Matteo di Giovanni on the other hand some of the orchestral players are behaving very casually and are evidently uncertain of their technique, and others look as though they were trying to keep their eyes firmly fixed for guidance on the conductor. In many of the altarpieces of Giovanni Bellini and Carpaccio the little *putto* who sits by himself, or is supported by a couple of youthful companions, on the *predella*, is often clearly in difficulties with his instruments—and no wonder, for sometimes the lute is nearly the same size as its apparently childish player—but, if one may judge from his concentrated expression, he seems determined all the same to push on bravely to the final cadence.

In contrast to these, the three blonde ladies of the School of Palma Vecchio (Plate 1) are paying such casual attention either to the music, which one of them is holding up, or indeed to anything else, that it is clear that the music is only an excuse for working up emotion, as it is in Giorgione's *Concert* in the Louvre, in Lely's *Family of the Artist* in Lord Lee of Fareham's collection, in Watteau's *Music Party* (Plate 7), and in some of Rossetti's paintings, and is really incidental to what Titian called the *poésie* which the painter wants to arouse in the spectator. This *poésie* is part of the romantic vision the artist carries in his head, a vision which can best be recaptured, as Shakespeare knew, by music. The mood of these works, and of Turner's dreamlike *Musical Party at Petworth* in the Tate, combined with their remoteness from actuality, places them in fact in a kind of borderland between music and painting. So again, Beardsley's poetical design (in black and white) for Chopin's Ballade in A Flat is so faithful a transcription of the curveting second subject that it becomes as musical as it is pictorial. And Fantin-Latour, like Proust, often found that music proved the best stimulus to production in his own medium, the music in Fantin's case being that of Berlioz, Schumann and Wagner.

Going back now from poetry to prose, and bearing in mind the difference in climate and manners on either side of the Alps, we shall see that the pictures by northern artists which link up music with daily life are as secular and domestic as those by Italians are ceremonial and religious. With a few exceptions such as are provided by Holbein's *Ambassadors*, Le Nain's *Peasants* (Plate 6), Zoffany's *Wandering Minstrels* at Parma, and the many musical topers in taverns that Teniers the Younger, Franz Hals, Jan Steen and Van Ostade liked to paint, the people represented are mostly the rich Dutch burghers in their comfortable, solidly appointed interiors. In France under Louis XIV and his successors music was apt to attach itself to the court from which, but for Watteau, it seldom strayed into the world that was reflected in painting. As to England, although many well-to-do and cultivated households in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had had their chests of viols and their families of lutes and recorders, and were often, as Pepys tells us, quite proficient performers, equally ready to play or sing at sight, native painters, apart from the miniaturists, had not by then got into their stride. And in the eighteenth century an English milord was apt to behave as Hogarth represents him (Plate 8), paying scant attention to the hired music and in fact talking through it loudly—telling Mr. Hardcastle's tale, probably, of 'Ould Grouse in the Gunroom'. Excusable, no doubt, in the days when Dr. Johnson admitted that he had once purchased a flageolet but had never learnt to play a tune on it, feeling perhaps that he might have been more successful had Boswell presented him with a bassoon. Curiously enough Hogarth himself provides us with contrary evidence of the musical behaviour of an aristocrat in his picture (in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich) of Lord George Graham sitting at table in the cabin of his ship and listening most attentively to a stout young man, who is singing a naval ballad to an accompaniment tapped out by a negro holding a drum. And there are of course numerous paintings by Zoffany showing English domestic scenes with various members of the family making music both in and out of doors.

In the tranquil and silvery works that Terborch, Metsu, Vermeer and Ochtervelt (Plate 5) have left behind them, and again in that remarkable picture by Jan Bruegel, the *Allegory of Hearing* in the Prado, in which an immense number of instruments are spread out for view in a spacious music-room, it is not the technical niceties of the playing that first strike the eye, though this is as obvious as in the Italian pictures mentioned above, but the decorative features of the instruments, which prove themselves at once to be as much part of the furniture of the house as the tables, chairs and sideboards. All over Europe highly skilled craftsmen took pleasure in making, and patrons in collecting, musical instruments which displayed the finest workmanship in the turning, the carving and the inlay of the lovely woods glowing under the transparent varnish, and often combined the art of the cabinet-maker and the

landscape painter inside the lids of the virginals and harpsichords.[1]

Music and musical instruments, one may say, were taken for granted by the Dutch middle classes. And whilst one must admit that Vermeer's little housemaid in the Czernin collection is slightly embarrassed at finding herself with a trumpet in her hands instead of a dustpan, one can also see that the young gallants who come to converse with her mistress are completely at home in a conversation about the new chamber work they have brought to try over, or the latest song, quite possibly by Dowland who at that time was very popular on the continent. In the preceding century, too, the spread of music in domestic circles and the public's increased familiarity with it may be gauged by two minor but significant facts: Dürer took the lute to illustrate his textbook on perspective, and Henry VIII at his death left a collection of 381 instruments—more than belonged to either of those other musical monarchs, Charles II or Frederick the Great.

The knowledge the painters had of their subject has sometimes provided such clear pictorial evidence of its nature, both in Italy and the North, that by careful observation of the fingering of a lute player we can infer the actual notes he is playing; so that, remembering that Fra Angelico and Dunstable died within two years of each other and that Josquin des Prés was born the same year as Botticelli (who seems to have been indifferent to music), one can go to pictures as well as to music to establish the exact moment in Renaissance history when thirds were first recognised as concords, and accidentals habitually employed. One learned musicologist has gone even further, and deduced from the details of a stone relief of the seventeenth century B.C. the nature of the music and the method of tuning the harp at the Persian court of that day. It only remains for some plodding professor of phonetics to look closely at the wide open mouths of Ercole de Roberti's three singers (Plate 4) or of Piero della Francesca's angels at the Nativity (both in the National Gallery), and then tell us from the relative position of lips, tongues and teeth, what madrigal it is that needs such careful beating of the time, and whether the angels are chanting the *Gloria* or the *Hosanna in Excelsis*.

The converse of this combination of musical understanding and careful recording is to be met with when, as often happens, a painter turns out not to be musical and makes ludicrous combinations of instruments, as Tennyson did with his 'flute, violin, bassoon' in Maud's garden; or is unobservant as well as unmusical, and represents a violinist playing without strings or drawing the bow over the strings but on the wrong side of the bridge. Hyper-sentimentalists, in painting as in novels, imagine that composers habitually write at the pianoforte with one hand strumming chords and one foot on the loud pedal. Blandly ignoring how music is either conceived, noted down, or performed, they combine lovers, organs (on which the chords are lost), sunsets, stained-glass windows, and other equally incongruous elements in one grand romantic slush. That precise and careful draftsman Ingres, himself a violinist, has left a drawing of a player at the pianoforte which has the black notes all grouped in bunches of three. And Raphael makes St. Cecilia so indifferent to the music of which she was supposed to be the patroness that, whilst turning her eyes up to heaven, she is letting the pipes slide out of her organ on to the ground. But perhaps Raphael knew that the historians are agreed that the saint (Dryden's 'sweet enthusiast') was celebrated more for her piety than for her skill in music.

Notation too is notoriously casual in paint, artists being usually satisfied to scatter a few dots quite arbitrarily on more or less authentic stave lines, or else to put in notes regardless of where they go or what value they have; so that in either case the result makes musical nonsense. There are, however, a few instances of perfectly accurate notation in pictures, with the passage transcribed so clearly that it can be played at sight from the canvas. Good examples are a youthful portrait of Mozart at the keyboard, Reynolds's Misses Paine sitting at the open harpsichord, and Hayls's portrait of Pepys holding in his hand the manuscript of his song, 'Beauty, retire'. And an interesting painting by Sebastiano Lazzari, an almost unknown eighteenth-century painter of Vicenza, was recently seen in London, in which an entire short composition on two staves was legibly reproduced, except for a few bars which were missing because they were covered by the scroll of a viol da gamba; and here the painter had left a space which, when measured, proved to be of the exact length that would have been occupied by the bars that were required to complete the musical phrase. It may be remembered too that Roubiliac's statue of Handel in Westminster Abbey includes a quotation from 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' which, in spite of its high position on the wall, is easily legible from below. But these are exceptions to the prevailing habit of minding the player and the instrument and of letting the notes look after themselves.

Deliberate distortion in the shape of instruments or the way they are held by the player, such as we find in John Copley's *String Quartet*, is quite a different thing. Here the figures' arms and hands are purposely intervolved and are given a kind of centrifugal force, in order to convey the impression that we are not looking at four separate instrumentalists but hearing chamber music in its most intimate and concentrated form.

So, too, painters of what may for convenience be called the Mandoline and Apple School—men like Picasso (Plate 10) and Braque—insert a mandoline or guitar amongst the figures or the still-life upon the table, not because they are musical instruments but because by

[1] Cf. Vermeer's *A Lady standing at the Virginals* (National Gallery).

[*continued on page* 24

Plate 2

MATTEO DI GIOVANNI

b. 1435; d. 1495, Sienese School

The Virgin of the Girdle

Tempera on wood. 130½ × 68½ inches

London : National Gallery

The musical interest here consists largely in the number and variety of the instruments brought together for a heavenly choral and orchestral society's concert in which a reasonably good balance has been obtained between strings and wind, with some of the performers singing as well as playing.

Taking the angels in order from the position nowadays occupied by the leader, St. Thomas catching the girdle being where the conductor would be, the first is playing a six-stringed viol, the next a pair of small kettle-drums. Of the two in the second row, the one behind the drummer has a psaltery, which, contrary to sound doctrine, she appears to be clasping rather awkwardly with her right elbow and playing with her left hand; the other has a portative organ. This type of organ, frequently to be found in the paintings of Orcagna, Fra Angelico and other fifteenth-century artists, was intended to be carried in processions and was on a sufficiently small scale to be suspended from the shoulders, like an itinerant Italian's old-fashioned barrel-organ (except that that had a support to the ground as well), so that the two hands were free, the right to play on the diminutive keyboard, the left to work the bellows from behind. It has reappeared with other religious *bric-à-brac* in some of the paintings of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. The three angels behind them are playing respectively a nine-stringed lute with a plectrum, a tambourine, and the double pipes, the first of the three being rather uncertain of her fingering, whilst the second is stroking the parchment with a strained, preoccupied air.

On the other side of the Virgin, the instruments are first a shawm, then cymbals, then a serpentine trumpet; below these are a harp and another shawm. A viol player and a lutanist, where we should look for the second violins, complete the orchestra, the foremost player keeping her eyes fixed on the Virgin, the other on the conductor.

Some of the angels in the back row are open-mouthed, others seem to be waiting for their cue; from which we may infer (or might, if players and choir were not so unprofessional in their methods) that we are listening to a passage which has technical difficulties for not very skilled amateur performers such as these, and is polyphonic and contrapuntal rather than harmonic in style.

Plate 3

COSIMO TURA

b. about 1430; d. 1495, Ferrarese School

The Virgin and Child Enthroned

Wood. 94 × 40 inches

London: National Gallery

The instrument in the foreground of this picture is a positive organ, which has its bellows blown by an assistant and, as its name implies, is built to stand in a fixed place on the floor, as distinct from the portative, or portable organ, seen in the picture by Matteo di Giovanni (Plate 2), which is slung by straps from the shoulders of the performer, who has to devote one hand to depressing the keys and the other to supplying the wind. The base of this positive organ is an elaborate and elegant example of architectural craftsmanship, and the pipes are enclosed within an open, slender, colonnaded framework on a circular base and are arranged in a spiral which diminishes as it ascends.

The two young people seated on the steps of the throne are both playing nine-stringed lutes of which the strings, pegs and frets are all painted with great precision, and the two figures standing behind them have five-stringed viols (six was the regular number) of an uncompromisingly baroque shape, with curved necks and peg-boxes surmounted, as they often were, with a carved scroll representing a human head. Attention has already been drawn (in the Introduction) to the serious and conscientious spirit with which the various instruments are being played in spite of the shape of the viols, which must have made them awkward, at any rate for beginners, to handle.

The peculiar design of these viols and the organ case is to be attributed either to the inventiveness and elaboration of craftsmanship of a fifteenth-century instrument maker or else to the idiosyncrasy of an artist who is manipulating the facts to suit his fancy. In the absence of similar surviving examples it is difficult to decide, but one thing is certain and that is that in shape they are as symptomatic of the mental world in which Cosimo Tura lived and worked as the highly ornate, sharp-edged canopy of the throne, the conventional rock-like folds of the Madonna's robe, and the care and self-conscientiousness with which the hair of all the heads is dressed.

Plate 4

ERCOLE ROBERTI

b. 1430; d. 1496, Ferrarese School

A Concert

Wood. $36\frac{3}{4} \times 29$ inches

London: National Gallery

The interesting feature of this picture, on the musical side, is the complete absorption of the three singers in what they are doing. The expression of the eyes alone is enough to show that they are listening not only to their own voices but to the *ensemble* to which each voice is contributing, an *ensemble* which is almost certainly difficult and polyphonic, either in three parts, or, if the lute is independent of the voices, in four. For the difference in the extent to which the three mouths are open is hardly to be accounted for by variations in the natural formation of the mouths, which actually show much the same characteristics in the shape of the lips. It is more likely to be because the three singers are enunciating different vowels, and therefore different syllables, as they pursue their separate contrapuntal vocal lines—a probability which is increased when one looks at three of the hands and observes the way in which the man on the right is carefully beating time with his middle finger and the woman is doing the same with the index. Had the music been simple and homophonic such intelligent-looking musicians would have needed no such aid.

On the ledge of the balcony behind which they stand are a small fiddle of unusual size and design, with a treble recorder lying across the bow, and a very small open book containing the score of the music. Here again, as in the previous picture (Plate 3) one has difficulty, in the absence of surviving evidence, in deciding whether one is looking at a literal representation of some diminutive type of bowed instrument then extant, or whether Roberti, having like Cosimo Tura (another Ferrarese) a very individual and baroque style, has partially invented this four-stringed and fretted fiddle without bouts to a plan and scale that suited his design, and then balanced it with the tiny book, which otherwise would seem too small to be read with comfort, even if it only contained the cues to their repertory and was placed within reach so as to be available for reference if required.

The elaborately carved rose in the soundhole of the lute is worth noticing as a characteristic piece of fine craftsmanship of the period.

Plate 5

J. OCHTERVELT

b. about 1635; d. before 1710, Dutch School

The Music Party

Canvas. 33 × 29½ inches

London: National Gallery

The music this party of three is making is possibly an instrumental duet for tenor viol (the viola da braccio) and virginals, with the lady in the background engrossed in the score, which she is holding at an angle that suits her own convenience but makes it necessary for the young man to lean over at an awkward angle to read the notes. Alternatively, it represents all three joining in one of those concerted works 'apt for voices or viols', which some composers of domestic music for amateurs in the seventeenth century wrote apparently for any combination of instruments and voices that happened to be available, leaving it to the performers to settle, according to mutual convenience, the exact distribution of parts between singers and players.

Ochtervelt, like Vermeer, knew the value of the virginals for enhancing the decorative appearance of the seated or standing female figure. Virginals, which are constructed like flat boxes, were placed on tables, sideboards or any other convenient piece of furniture, and could be played sitting or standing according to the height of the keyboard and also, of course, according to the amount of emphasis the artist wished to put on the contrast between the horizontal and the perpendicular lines in his design.

It is always ladies, never men, who are to be found playing them in the numerous pictures that were painted over a period of two centuries; and Parthenia (i.e. Maidens' Songs) is the title of the first published anthology of virginal music, which facts have suggested the possible origin of the term virginals. Some historians have connected the word with the Virgin Queen, who was herself an adept on the instrument but can hardly have given her name to it, as the use of the term in English occurs before she was born. Others, with more bias towards philology than romance, have supposed it to be derived from the mediæval latin *virga*, meaning the jack or plectrum which plucks the strings.

One cannot help wondering whether the music-makers in the picture were very musical, for the virginals, like the clavichord and unlike the harpsichord, have a small, gentle tone, so that the *ensemble*, however spirited, must inevitably have been drowned by the two little pampered pet dogs who are yapping at each other across the stretch of polished floor. No dogs are allowed to disturb the serenity of Vermeer's sunny music-rooms. On the one occasion when he did paint them he did not admit them within doors, but represented them more appropriately as the outdoor companions of that other famous virgin goddess, Diana.

Plate 6

LOUIS LE NAIN

b. 1593; d. 1648, French School

Family of Peasants

Collection of Lord Leconfield

In this picture of strolling beggars, from their appearance almost certainly gipsies, taking shelter in the covered yard of an inn, where they are receiving hospitality from peasants of the Spanish type still to be found in the Franche-Comté, we come into contact with a very different world from what we find in any of the other illustrations. The Dutch seventeenth-century painters recorded examples of what used to be called 'low-life' in their canvases of villagers dancing at a *kermesse* or making music in a tavern, but gipsies were different. For though they might often be beggars they sometimes had more racial pride and skill in the musical art they brought with them from eastern Europe than some of the hosts who patronised them. Murillo, rather surprisingly, does not seem to have introduced any Spanish gipsies into his street scenes, nor does he put musical instruments into the hands of his beggar boys. In the peasant compositions by the brothers Le Nain, on the other hand, we find figures playing string and wind instruments of various types and treating them as familiar ingredients in their daily life. The note of authenticity is also struck unmistakably in the peasants themselves who smell of the soil, in contrast to Greuze's stage peasants a hundred years later whose scent is only that of the salon.

Here the handsome young man standing in the foreground is handling with pride the small fiddle which in the seventeenth century went by the name of *pochette*, *sordino*, or *Taschengeige*, according to its country of origin. This was derived in shape from a mediæval rebec, the neck being a prolongation of the body and not attached to it, as it would have been had it belonged to the viol family, and in the later part of the century was replaced by the kit, a diminutive violin which was carried by dancing masters in their pocket and was used, as we know from Mr. Turveydrop's Academy, down to the middle of the Victorian era to mark the rhythm for their pupils. The young man who is clearly an ancestor of Piramus, the gipsy fiddler in 'The Romany Rye', has the strong fingers required of an executant (Paganini had the strongest and largest hands of any violinist known to history), and if not about to play one of his own compositions, or a traditional gipsy tune, may well be preparing to embroider variations on one of the French folk tunes which in the course of his wanderings he would have picked up, with his quick ear for music and aptitude for repeating what he had once heard—tunes which have been preserved for us in the collections of Tiersot, Weckerlin, Vincent d'Indy and other modern French musicians.

Plate 7

ANTOINE WATTEAU

b. 1684; d. 1721, French School

The Music Party

Canvas. 25½ × 36¼ inches

London: Wallace Collection

This group of a mother with her household and children seated on the terrace, from which one looks across at another group lolling on the grass under the trees, recalls the nostalgic atmosphere of the opening scene of 'Twelfth Night' with the lovesick duke calling for music from his attendant suite. A lesson has doubtless been given, only now the violoncello has been discarded, the score lies open by the stool, and the lady, relaxed and absorbed in her daydreams, rests her elbow on the guitar which she holds in her lap, ready to listen to the handsome music master whose turn it is to play to the family. The instrument he holds is a theorbo, a large-sized lute with two sets of strings and corresponding tuning pegs, which was in Watteau's day passing out of use for accompanying the voice or other instruments, though it did survive as late as 1732 when Handel wrote a part for it in his 'Esther'. He is obviously conscious of the picturesque attitude that he strikes as he rests the body of the instrument on his hip, finally adjusts the pegs, and prepares 'to sweep the faint strings with his long, lean hand'.

The music here is however incidental rather than a primary factor in the design; it 'vibrates in the memory' and is introduced to help arouse in the spectator the wistful and erotic melancholy which underlies so many of Watteau's paintings and was in its turn the product of the consumption from which he suffered and eventually died. His use of figures from the Italian Comedy of Masks, though based on actual experience, like his love of music and his sense of the theatre, was another index of his instinct to bid the lovely moment stay that he might escape from the bonds of contemporary life. Music and the company of Gilles and Harlequin gave him the opportunity of exercising that supreme talent for decoration which he had sharpened by the study of the works of his fellow-Fleming, Rubens. But the music in Watteau's pictures, though romantic in origin and treated decoratively, was nevertheless music for musicians. The lute and guitars that cut diagonally across the open spaces of his design may, as Verlaine says of them, 'swoon with the rose and grey ecstasy of the moon', but unlike those in some romantic paintings, they also lend themselves to the practical fingers of the professional player.

Plate 8

WILLIAM HOGARTH

b. 1697; d. 1764, British School

Marriage A-la-Mode—Scene IV

Canvas. 27 × 35 inches

London: Tate Gallery

Horace Walpole described Hogarth's *Marriage A-la-Mode* as being like a play by Molière, and Elia compares the satirist in Hogarth to the Shakespeare of 'Timon of Athens'. A more modern generation may find that the picture of the countess's crowded and animated dressing-room reminds them of the opening scene of 'Rosenkavalier', where friends, relatives, duns, milliners, servants, tradesmen, barbers and musicians drop in upon an already noisy and distracted household and aggravate the prevailing din.

In Hogarth's picture a *crescendo* is obviously working up, thanks partly to the efforts of the fat singer and the lean flautist, who bends over his shoulder to read the *obbligato* from the open score. According to John Nichols, the eighteenth-century antiquary, these two musicians are a certain Waideman, a German flautist, and Carestini, the famous *castrato*.

Flautists in the eighteenth century often came from Prussia, where the transverse flute (as distinct from the recorder type) was known as the German flute and where a good example of what may be achieved by the persistence of a wind player was set from the throne. For Frederick the Great, having been sternly forbidden by his father to study the effeminate pastime of music, had, as a young man, to practise and compose in secret, and was driven surreptitiously to engage musicians under the pretence of their being domestic servants. One of his teachers was the celebrated Quantz, who not only taught him to play the flute but eventually became court composer and dedicated to his royal master 200 flute sonatas and 300 concertos. The Hanoverians popularised the instrument in this country both for solos and *ensembles*, and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was frequently used, as here, to supply an *obbligato* for a song.

Carestini began his career as a male soprano, but soon developed a contralto voice which, combined with his wonderful sense of style and his skill as an actor, brought him into the highest repute all over the continent, and led to his being engaged by Handel to sing in London as a counter-attraction to Farinelli who was employed by the rival opera house.

Nobody in the company, it may be observed, is paying the slightest attention to the music, not even the young exquisite who sits, with his hair in curling-papers, sipping his coffee only a few inches from the tip of the flute. Considering the volume and the penetrating tones which we know from Dr. Burney and others to have characterised the voices of this race of singers, it speaks well for the concentration of the members of the household on their various mundane pursuits.

Plate 9

AUGUSTUS JOHN

b. 1878, British School

Madame Guilhermina Suggia

Canvas: 73½ × 65 inches

London: Tate Gallery

All the people who are represented making music in the other pictures in this book, with the exception of the young man in the Le Nain (Plate 6), are contributing to some form of *ensemble* and taking part in a 'consort of music', as it was called in Elizabethan days. In this picture the player is most emphatically playing a solo and is enjoying her solitude. Of these two fundamentally different types of instrumental music one is social in origin, demanding in its simplest forms a capacity for give-and-take between anything from two to half a dozen performers; the other is individual in character and includes music written for a single virtuoso with or without accompaniment by subordinates.

The viol da gamba, the base form of the viol, played, as its name implies, resting on the performer's leg, retained its popularity till nearly the end of the eighteenth century, so that the violoncello, the base of the violin family, which was more difficult to play, did not come into its own as a solo instrument till comparatively late in the day. It eventually ousted its rival for the same reason that the violin with its powerful tone won the victory over the gentle viol in its smaller sizes; it was a case of what has been aptly called the 'survival of the loudest'. That it was also capable with its quiet *cantilena* of soothing the troubled mind we know from what Trollope has told us of the help it proved to the Warden of Hiram's Hospital.

Italy was the country where, in the hands of Amati, the violoncello took on its now familiar shape, but technical developments in fingering and bowing were worked out in France; and in Germany, too, great strides were taken in methods of playing it, as may be seen from the *obbligato* parts which Handel wrote for it and from Bach's six solo suites which are still the chief musical glory of the violoncello's repertory. As the base partner in the string quartet it came into its own with Haydn, and Mozart gave it plenty to do in the three works he dedicated to the then King of Prussia who, like his forebear Frederick the Great, was a performing musician.

Madame Suggia has devoted herself, as her teacher Casals has done, to the interpretation of the great classics and anyone who has heard her and watched her play as she is represented here, with her eyes closed, rapt in her music, is likely to think of the occasion as having provided an unforgettable experience.

Plate 10

PABLO PICASSO

b. 1881, Spanish School

Les trois masques

(Painted 1921)

$80\frac{3}{4} \times 88\frac{1}{2}$ inches

Though Pierrots and guitars are common to some of the canvases of Watteau and Picasso, they are introduced into their works from different motives. To Watteau a guitar was part of the paraphernalia with which he built up the romantic mood of his picture; at the same time it was treated, from his own familiarity with it, as an instrument from which authentic sounds could be extracted by Pierrot or any other self-respecting musician. To Picasso there was nothing at all romantic about a guitar; to him, as to many other Spaniards, it was as regular a companion as an umbrella to an Englishman. In *The old guitar player*, painted in 1903, he treated the instrument with comparative realism; elsewhere he liked to arrange a guitar or a mandoline, with fruit and a crumpled cloth to make those designs which Sickert nicknamed 'crumpers', and under a self-denying ordinance, which was common to some of his contemporaries, left this miscellaneous still-life without what was regarded as the sentimental and literary intrusion of the human form.

Again, Watteau regarded Harlequin as a souvenir of what he had so often seen in Paris—a performance by the Italian Comedy of Masks. Picasso introduced him into a whole series of his pictures, partly because Harlequin stood for a symbol of his own underlying romanticism. In the picture here reproduced the sharp-cut lozenges of his costume make a good foil to the grey dress of Pierrot and to the dark robe of the figure who precariously holds a sheet of three-staved music. For the three musicians are in the picture not because of the claims of music as such, but in order to provide a pattern of flat, geometrical forms. Cézanne had told the world that all nature could be reduced to cones, spheres and cylinders; Picasso took over this doctrine and went one better with it down the road of rigid logic that leads to the citadel of abstract art. Canvas, he argued, was flat; therefore nothing painted on it must pretend to be in three dimensions; therefore the orthodox geometrical forms must be superimposed, and in order to make clear which is super-imposed on which, the planes were to be coloured differently and split into fragments showing sharp, jagged edges.

In this somewhat arid, Euclidian world it would be futile for a musician to look too inquisitively at the trio, to speculate on the nature of the wind instrument and the method of playing it, or to address the hooded figure in the words that Shelley used to Jane: 'The guitar was tinkling, but the notes were not sweet till you sang them again'. Anyhow, the little dog in the background (yet another dog who has strayed into a musical picture) obviously laughs to see such sport, so perhaps we had better leave it at that.

continued from page 5]
their shape (even though only partially indicated) they help the artist to build up his formal design in cubes and conic sections.

Finally there are a number of pictorial records in which for the moment we see the musician caught, as it were, in the act of making music. (There are also, of course, many distinguished portraits of musicians without the music, such as Closterman's of Purcell, Gainsborough's of John Christian Bach, Reynolds's of Dr. Burney, Archer Shee's of Malibran, Delacroix's of Chopin, Ingres's of Liszt, Courbet's of Berlioz—there is another by Daumier—Carrière's of Chausson, Blanche's of Debussy, Picasso's of Stravinsky, and Renoir's sketch of Wagner.) Sometimes it is a group, like the orchestra in Degas's picture at Frankfort, or the singers in the third act of 'The Beggar's Opera' by Hogarth in the Tate, or the players rehearsing with Lulli in Rigaud's painting in the National Gallery, or the Mozart family in Carmontelle's drawing, or the composers and critics shown by Fantin-Latour standing round the pianoforte with Chabrier at the keyboard, or just a musical party in a drawing-room by Gainsborough, Zoffany or Tissot. A drawing by Menzel portrays the youthful Joachim and Clara Schumann playing a duet. More often the single figure is shown—Mozart at the harpsichord by Lange, and Gluck playing the same instrument by Duplessis; Franck in the organ-loft by Rongier; Gounod by Ingres and Ethel Smyth by Sargent, both at the pianoforte; Rameau by Chardin, Rebel by Watteau, Paganini by Ingres, and also by Delacroix, Sarasate by Whistler, Joachim by Watts, Antonietti by Francis Dodd, all with their violins; Fischer with his oboe and Abel with his violoncello, both by Gainsborough, and Suggia with her violoncello by Augustus John (Plate 9). Paganini, taut with energy and with emphasis on the immense hands, is vividly portrayed in a pen and ink sketch by Landseer and again in a contemporary caricature in gilded plaster by the French modeller, Danton. And that makes one think of what lies just outside the range of this chapter: the portrait busts of musicians, (Roubiliac's of Handel, Houdon's of Gluck, Schaller's of Beethoven, Carpeaux's of Gounod, amongst others), as well as the innumerable sketches and caricatures of music and musicians, ranging from the comic prints and drawings by Laroon, Patch, Reynolds, Bartolozzi and others in the eighteenth century, down to those by Wilhelm Busch, René Bull, Caran d'Ache and Edmund Kapp.

Enough has been said to suggest that, even if one only takes a rapid bird's eye survey of the vast field opened up by the subject, Painting and Music have during many periods of human history played duets happily and harmoniously together.

Note on Plate 1

SCHOOL OF PALMA VECCHIO: *A Concert*

$35\frac{3}{4} \times 48$ inches

Venetian School, 16th Century. London: National Gallery

The music which is here being made in the open air forms, with the trees in the park and the distant hilly landscape, a romantic background for the group of three richly caparisoned ladies, and is clearly not taken by them very seriously. Actually, lutes would be apt to suffer in the open air, for they were notoriously difficult to keep in tune. Thomas Mace in 1676 declared that the only way to be sure that one's lute remained in good condition was to keep it in a bed which was in constant use; and Mattheson, writing a generation later, asserts that a certain lutanist aged eighty had spent sixty years in tuning his instrument, and adds that keeping a lute is as expensive as keeping a horse.

Nevertheless, though the music is here the painter's excuse for painting rather than the subject of the picture, the artist shows himself to have been a more conscientious musician than the ladies, seeing that the musical features of the picture make sense. The shape of the lute itself, an instrument some of the best makers of which lived in Venice, the stopping of the strings by the firmly pressing fingertips, the placing of the tail-piece and of the frets on the fingerboard, the position of the tuning pegs on the bent-back head—all this shows a sharp eye for musical detail; pains, too, have been taken with the music itself which is an *aria* for solo voice.

It looks as though the lady in the centre were not only singing but, as was natural in those days, also filling in the accompaniment (she apparently knows her song by heart, as she pays no attention to the score which is held open for her); and the friend on her right, who for the time being lets her own lute hang loose in her hand whilst she sings (also discarding the music), is possibly improvising a descant. Or is she really only standing rather self-consciously for her portrait? One cannot dogmatise, for in this type of Venetian picture the music is just part of the romantic *mise-en-scène*; to pry too closely into it would be pedantry.

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